



## U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

# Naturalization Process for the Military Fact Sheet

USCIS recognizes the important sacrifices made by non-citizen members of the United States armed forces and their families, and is committed to processing their naturalization applications in a timely and efficient manner while providing exemplary customer service, maintaining the integrity of the immigration system, and the security of the process. Qualifying military service is generally in the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, and certain components of the National Guard and the Selected Reserve of the Ready Reserve.

### Qualifications

- While a member of the U.S. armed forces must meet the general requirements and qualifications to become a citizen of the United States, such as good moral character, some of the other requirements are either reduced or completely waived. Specifically, qualifying service members and certain veterans are not required to demonstrate residence or physical presence in the United States, and are not required to pay an application fee or a biometrics fee to apply for naturalization. In addition, service members who serve during specifically designated periods of hostilities may not need to be lawful permanent residents.
- The *National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2004* extended all aspects of the naturalization process, including naturalization applications, interviews, oaths and ceremonies to members of the U.S. armed forces serving abroad. Before Oct. 1, 2004, service members could only naturalize while physically within the United States.
- The *National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008* added Sections 319(e) and 322(d) to the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA), which allows certain eligible spouses and children of members of the U.S. armed forces to naturalize abroad without traveling to the United States for any part of the naturalization process.

### Service in Wartime (INA Section 329)

- Members of the military, who serve during specifically designated periods of hostilities, may qualify for naturalization under this provision if they have served honorably in an active duty status for any period of time, and if that service was during a specifically designated period of hostility.
- Unlike all other provisions for naturalization, a qualifying service member is not required to be a lawful permanent resident to naturalize under this provision if the service member enlisted, or was inducted within the United States or other qualifying geographical area.
- The *Expedited Naturalization Executive Order of 2002* provides for expedited naturalization under this provision to qualified aliens and non-citizen nationals serving

honorably in an active-duty status in the U.S. armed forces beginning on Sept. 11, 2001 to the present. This section also covers veterans of designated past wars and conflicts.

### **Service in Peacetime (INA Section 328)**

An individual may qualify for naturalization under this provision if he or she:

- Served honorably in the military for at least one year
- Obtained lawful permanent resident status
- Filed an application while still in the service or within six months of separation.

### **Assistance to the Military Community**

- Specially trained USCIS customer service specialists provide assistance with naturalization and immigration issues over the military help line, 1-877-CIS-4MIL (1-877-247-4645) and e-mail service, [militaryinfo.nsc@dhs.gov](mailto:militaryinfo.nsc@dhs.gov), established exclusively for the military and their families.
- USCIS also posts information for the military online at <http://www.uscis.gov/military>.
- Specialists across USCIS have been selected to handle military naturalization packets. They consider this a privilege and an honor, and do all that they can to ensure that applications are processed and completed as expeditiously as possible.
- In addition, each military installation has a designated point-of-contact to assist service members in preparing and filing their naturalization application packet. This person is usually in the military legal office or in the personnel division.

### **Application Packet (from a member of the military)**

- Application for Naturalization, (USCIS Form N-400)
- Request for Certification of Military or Naval Service, (USCIS Form N-426)
- If applicable, a copy of the USCIS Form I 551, Permanent Resident Card; and
- Two passport-style photographs.
- NOTE – There is no fee for members of the military applying for naturalization under INA Sections 328 or 329.

### **Five Fingerprinting Methods Available to Service Members**

1. Have the fingerprints taken at any USCIS Application Support Center (ASC) in the United States without an appointment even if their application is not yet pending with USCIS.
2. Have the fingerprints taken at select military installations in the United States by USCIS personnel using mobile fingerprinting equipment.
3. If USCIS has useable fingerprints on file (taken for immigration purposes), USCIS will re-submit these fingerprints to the FBI.
4. The service member may authorize USCIS to acquire and use the fingerprints taken at the time of enlistment by completing and submitting the Fingerprint Authorization.
5. Have their fingerprints taken at U.S. military installations overseas or at U.S. Embassies and Consulates using the FD-258 fingerprint card.

## Statistics

- Since September 2001, USCIS has naturalized more than 58,300 members of the military, in ceremonies across the United States and in the following 19 countries: Afghanistan, Djibouti, China, Cuba, El Salvador, Germany, Greece, Honduras, Iceland, Iraq, Italy, Japan, Kenya, Kosovo, Kuwait, Philippines, South Korea, Spain, and the United Kingdom.
- Since August 2002, USCIS has granted posthumous citizenship to 131 members of the military.
- Since 2008, USCIS has naturalized 592 military spouses during ceremonies in Bulgaria, China, Germany, Italy, Japan, Kuwait, Panama, South Korea, Spain, Turkey, and the United Kingdom.
- Since 2009, USCIS has presented 19 military children with citizenship certificates during ceremonies in Germany, Japan, South Korea and the United Kingdom.

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